



**CITY OF SCOTTSDALE  
MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
Thursday, October 5, 2017  
Florence Ely Nelson Desert Park  
8950 E. Pinnacle Peak Road  
Scottsdale, AZ 85255**

**PRESENT:** Chairperson Bob Frost, Vice-Chair Mike Milillo, Commissioners Bobby Alpert, Steve Dodd, Con Englehorn, Jace McKeighan, and Cynthia Wenstrom

**STAFF:** Bill Murphy, Director of Community Services; Kroy Ekblaw, Preserve Director; Scott Hamilton, Senior Trails Planner; Natural Resources Coordinators Yvonne Massman and Robert Graves; City Treasurer Jeff Nichols; and Enterprise Finance Manager Gina Kirklin

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Frost called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

**2. ROLL CALL**

Members present as noted above.

**3. PUBLIC COMMENT**

There were no members of the public who wished to speak on non-agendized items.

**4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**COMMISSIONER MCKEIGHAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE SEPTEMBER 28, 2017 MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES AS SUBMITTED. COMMISSIONER DODD SECONDED. THE MOTION CARRIED BY A VOTE OF SEVEN (7) TO ZERO (0).**

**5. MCDOWELL SONORAN CONSERVANCY UPDATE**

Paul Staker gave an update on MSC activities. He noted that the outdoor programs have started, they have completed several construction and maintenance projects, and Pathfinders started in mid-September, and the public hike program will start in mid-October and they are planning approximately 75 hikes during season. He anticipates that there will be approximately 2,000 participants for the Tour de Scottsdale bike race scheduled Sunday, October 8, 2017 beginning at 6:30 a.m. The Junior Citizens Science Festival is scheduled for November 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

## **6. NAMING PROPOSAL FOR PIMA/DYNAMITE FUTURE AMPHITHEATER**

Kroy Ekblaw reviewed the request to name the future amphitheater at Pima/Dynamite Trailhead the Dr. Arthur W. DeCabooter Amphitheatre. He noted that the DeCabooter family has given their support and the item is expected to go to City Council on November 13, 2017.

Citizens Carla, Bob Cafarella, Christine Kovach and Joan Fudala spoke about Dr. DeCabooter as a living legend and highlighted the many critical contributions he made to the creation and continuing preservation of the McDowell Sonoran Preserve:

**COMMISSIONER ALPERT MOVED TO APPROVE THE NAMING OF THE FUTURE AMPHITHEATRE AT THE PLANNED PIMA/DYNAMITE TRAILHEAD FOR THE DR. ART DECABOOTER AMPHITHEATER. VICE-CHAIR MILILLO SECONDED AND THE MOTION CARRIED BY A VOTE OF SEVEN (7) TO ZERO (0).**

## **7. FINANCIAL REPORT AND ENDOWMENT UPDATE**

Kroy Ekblaw gave an update on the status of the Preserve tax and the endowment for perpetual care of the Preserve. The presentation reviewed the Preserve tax funding, which is currently estimated to have \$126.6 million in uncommitted cash available from Preserve taxes through 2034 and a \$21 to \$34 million estimate for land acquisition and improvements. He explained that City Council has given direction to look at the idea of an endowment from a financial and legal perspective. He noted that there are five-year limits on investment term lengths. Use of the Preserve tax would require a public vote and only dollars collected after a successful vote would be available for endowment. First priority will always be given to repayment of bonds.

For future discussion, some members of the Council have raised the question: From a policy standpoint, is it appropriate for taxes collected to be used in a “savings account” to support the perpetual care of the Preserve?

There was also interest in learning whether consideration could be given to amending the Preserve tax to extend it and provide flexibility for maintenance.

There is a question of whether the city can achieve a sustainable interest rate of three percent estimate and how that would affect projections for both the perpetual care and research education accounts. Mr. Ekblaw discussed the proposed research and education set-aside, which the example projected at \$120,000 as part of the yearly budget process.

Commission members were given an opportunity to ask questions. Mr. Ekblaw explained that the first voter approved tax was for land acquisition only and the second tax was for land and improvements. The second tax would be the one proposed for amendment and would carry out to 2034. Discussion ensued regarding the reliability of the estimated projections, investment limits and current yields, and the contribution from the bed tax to the Desert EDGE.

## **8. REVIEW OF PRESERVE IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS**

Kroy Ekblaw briefly reviewed the improvements that are part of the current \$17 million improvements budget. Current projects include improvements to trailheads, the Gateway, Sunrise, Ringtail, Tom's Thumb, Fraesfield, Granite Mountain, Pima/Dynamite, trails throughout the Preserve, and the wildlife crossing at Dynamite/Rio Verde. He listed improvements that

could be under consideration but are not yet budgeted, including trailhead improvements, restoration of disturbed areas, invasive plants, fire prevention and safety considerations, and

Pinnacle Peak Park parking improvements. He solicited input on the additional improvement projects, which would require the budget to be increased to approximately \$34 million.

Commission members were given an opportunity to ask questions. Mr. Ekblaw explained that as an example, a future naturally occurring wildfire would fall in the category of restoration and would be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

For Pinnacle Peak Park, he noted that the goal would be to acquire two or three acres within the recommended study boundary, using Preserve funds, to accommodate an additional 300 parking stalls at Pinnacle Peak and thus remove the need for existing street parking.

Chair Frost requested that individual projects be brought to the Commission for additional discussion.

## **9. MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION SUNSET REVIEW**

Bill Murphy explained the purpose of the sunset review, which is required of each board and commission every three years. Information on MSPC activities for the past three years will be presented as part of the process. The Audit Committee will make a recommendation on November 13<sup>th</sup>, which will then be forwarded to City Council as part of their consent agenda.

## **10. TRAILHEAD DESIGN AND IMPROVEMENT STATUS**

Mr. Ekblaw gave an update on the status of the Pima/Dynamite Trailhead improvements. He presented an aerial photograph depicting the existing disturbed areas and concept locations for access parking, and equestrian areas. Open houses are being scheduled for early to mid-November.

## **11. STAFF REPORTS**

### **RFP status for Preserve Projects Requiring Analysis**

Kroy Ekblaw announced that out of four qualified applicants, the Conservancy/Field Institute was awarded the RFP contract. Responsibilities will include studying the impacts of trails and trailheads on wildlife habitat, interpretive trail design, and study of invasive plants, and restoration.

### **South Area Update – Jr. Citizen Science Festival**

Robert Graves announced that the Junior Citizens Science Festival is scheduled for November 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017. He said that a plaque will be installed on the Gateway Trailhead flagpole base sometime before Veteran's Day.

The new sustainability working group will have its first meeting tomorrow at Gateway Trailhead. The goal of the group is to educate visitors and create programs that will encourage more sustainable operations within the Preserve. The first meeting will focus on reducing the use of disposable water bottles in the Preserve.

## **Commercial and Special Use Permit Policy**

Scott Hamilton outlined the difference between a commercial permit and a special use permit. He noted that information regarding streamlining the process for both categories will be presented during the Commission's November meeting.

Kroy Ekblaw said that Mayor Lane will acknowledge October as Preserve Month at the October 17, 2017 City Council meeting.

### **12. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS**

There were no Commissioner comments.

### **13. AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

Financial Report and Endowment Follow-up  
Review of Improvement Projects for future budgeting in the Preserve  
Trailhead Design and Public Meeting Process  
Commercial and Special Use Permit Policy  
Trailhead Host Concept

Vice-Chair Milillo suggested that an item be agendaized to discuss sending another letter to City Council regarding the Desert EDGE, clarifying statements made in the previous letter and based on comments that were made during the September 7<sup>th</sup> MSPC meeting.

Commissioner Wenstrom requested that Commission Members be provided with a copy of the budget presentation.

### **14. ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business to discuss, being duly moved and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 6:29 p.m.

Recorded and Transcribed by eScribers, LLC.